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LECTURES

ON THE EPISTLE TO

THE COLOSSIANS.

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LECTURES

ON THE EPISTLE TO

THE COLOSSIANS.

BY

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(From Notes supplied by Mr. R. Lundin Brown.)

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The Epistle to the Colossians.

Chapter I.

THIS Epistle is intimately connected with the Epistle to the Ephesians. They were both written about the same time by Paul when he was a prisoner. Ephesians brings before us fully our position in Christ. Colossians—as we shall see—calls us solemnly to let that love of His, sway us wholly. While in Ephesians we learn how Christ has loved us, saved us, and brought us nigh to God, Colossians brings before us that He is our Lord, whom we are bound to obey. It is as if the apostle had said, "I have heard, through Epaphras, of your salvation. I was glad to hear of your faith in Christ, of your love to all the saints, and that you had heard of the hope laid up for you in heaven. But there is a great deal yet for you to learn, and I, the apostle of the Lord pray, that you may go on and learn more of Christ. You are only babes as yet, but I desire that you may grow and be filled with the knowledge of your Lord's will, and have spiritual intelligence, sensitiveness, and quickness to know at a glance what is His will, so as to walk worthy of Him."

It is Jesus the Saviour, the Lover, the Bridegroom in

Ephesians; it is Jesus the Lord and Head in Colossians. The same Person, but in a different character.

Verse 2.—"Grace and peace." Saints need both, and shall need them as long as they are here. There is no "mercy" here, that is for the individual (see 1 Tim. i. and 2; Titus i. 2, &c.).

Verse 3.—"We give thanks." . . . "Praying always for you." It is a sign of grace, to be able to praise and pray on behalf of others. These Colossian saints were well prayed for (see chap iv. 12).

Verse 4.—"Since we heard of your faith." Paul had not been instrumental in their conversion. He had heard of it. The first thing he puts his finger on, is their faith in Christ Jesus; not in men, or dreams, or feelings, but "in Christ Jesus." This is the first feature of a true Christian. The next is "love to all the saints." There is only One who knows "*all* the saints," but as sure as we get to know a saint, we love him, not because he is kind, and amiable, and loveable, but because he is Christ's.

Verse 5.—"For the hope." We are not to be for ever in this world, or to be thinking of it as our home. The moment a sinner is saved, his eye is directed to "the hope"—the coming of the Lord Jesus. It is really a part of the gospel; if you leave that out, you do not preach a full gospel. "The hope" brightens all the path. You may have to rough it for a little, but cheer up, the Lord is coming (see 1 Thess. i. 6, 10).

Verse 6.—Their conversion was manifest; the gospel had borne its fruit, for they had known "the grace of God in truth."

What a blessed reality, is "the grace of God." God was gracious to sinners; enjoy that. He saved you, not according to your feeble experience of it, but according to what He Himself is. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 20). God did it all.

Verse 7.—"A faithful minister"—not *the* minister, of course. There is nothing in Scripture of *the* minister, or *the* pastor of a church. They are always spoken of in the plural, or where an individual is mentioned, it is with the indefinite article—"*an* elder," "*a* witness"—(1 Pet. v. 1).

Verse 8.—"Your love in the Spirit." This is the only allusion to the Holy Ghost in the whole Epistle: it is very remarkable. It is not human charity, but "love in the Spirit"—that which is of God. This is what He values. "Love in the Spirit"—"Love in the truth" (2 John, verse 2).

Verses 9-10.—"Filled with the knowledge of His will." We are accountable to our Lord and Master, who has done so much for us, to know His will. Paul did not say as some evangelists now, "To get sinners saved is all; my only aim." He desired that those who had become saints, might be filled with the knowledge of their Lord's will. And Epaphras, who had been the means of their

conversion, and had since then heard Paul's teaching, and learned more of the will of God, prayed that they might stand complete "in *all* the will of God" (chap. iv. 12). They had faith, hope, and love (verses 4—5), but Paul did not say they might seek no more, or settle down to do as they liked. Ah, no; he said, "Now that you have a new Master, you must go on to learn His will and ways, and walk worthy of Him." To be saved is not the end, but the beginning of the Christian life. We enter the path and the service of a new Master, very ignorant of His will, so we must begin at the beginning, and learn it. We need to have our ears open, and our senses exercised "in all wisdom." It implies there is a sort of spiritual instinct required in the saint. He must have the well-tuned ear, to hear the whispers of the Spirit.

Verse 10.—"That ye may walk worthy of the Lord." He is our Lord; we belong to Him. Let us see that our walk corresponds to our calling. The Lord has done everything for us that He, the Eternal Son, could do. He asks us now to do that which is pleasing unto Him.

Verse 11.—"Strengthened with all might, according to the might of His glory" (R.V.). Power and glory are frequently joined together in Scripture. The glory has a wonderful power in it. When the glory of Christ shines into the heart, it gives strength, and when it shines forth openly to the world, it will shew the power

of God. Now we walk by faith; then it shall be open to sight. To us the word is—"If you shalt believe, thou shalt see the glory" (John xi. 16). "Unto all patience." Strengthened to be patient, and to go on pleasing the Lord and learning His will; roughing it bravely, and going on whole-hearted for Him. If you have to rough it in doing His will, you are serving a good Master, and He will put a crown on your head one day. He will be no man's debtor.

To learn of Him who is meek and lowly, involves suffering now, but there will be blessing with it in the end. "The might of His glory." How it cheers us up, and encourages our hearts! It gets nearer and brighter every day. Our flesh hinders and drags us down, but the glory is our strength. When it shines forth in all its power, it will change our bodies of humiliation and fashion them like unto the body of His glory (see Phil. iii. 20). But the same power is at work now upon our spirits. As we behold the glory we are changed (2 Cor. iii. 18).

"Unto all patience, with longsuffering and joyfulness." A very rare combination. "Sorrowful yet always rejoicing." We sing, even though our eyes be dim with tears, and we rejoice though sorrow fills one heart.

Verse 12.—"Giving thanks unto the Father." Emphasis is on the word "Father." Most of our prayers and worship should be addressed to Him, for although Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in nature, they are

not alike in office. The Son died for us, but we must never forget that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour" (1 John iv. 17). Then we get three "haths." "Who *hath* made us meet." "Who *hath* delivered us." "Who *hath* translated us." How precious they are! "Hath made us meet,"—that is fit, or capable,—"to be sharers of the inheritance of the saints in light." What a portion! The reference is to the new nature in the saint. He has a nature that can enjoy the light, as sure as he is born of God. He has not only a title, but a nature to enjoy the place into which he has been introduced. Surely the two are better than one. Suppose I had a title, if my nature were unchanged, I could not enjoy the presence of God: I could not be happy, but very wretched there. "The inheritance of the saints in light": every saint will have a share in that inheritance. In England the eldest son gets all. The Lord Jesus, the First-born from the dead, is Heir of all, but He will not have it for Himself alone: He shares it with us. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17). "In light." We *are* children of light (Eph. v.) and as such we are to walk. Brought to God, who is light as well as love, we are to walk in that light as John tells us (1 John i. 7), and to judge ourselves by it. Just because you are a child of light, you are to bring everything in your life, walk, work, worship, associations, and examine them by the light (John iii. 20). If you find anything contrary to the

Word of God, let the light sift it, expose it, and put it away. The more we do that, and accustom ourselves to the searchings of the light now, the less painful will it be to go to the judgment-seat. There we shall be manifested in the light. The more we abide in that light now, the more shall we delight in it. God has given us a nature to enjoy it, here and now, and we are to dwell in it eternally. People in the dark, can see what those in the light are doing, but this is not so in spiritual things, but the more you are in God's light, the more you see the darkness around. Abraham, on the mount of communion with God, abiding in the light, knew more of Sodom's state, and what was about to happen there, than Lot, who sat in its gate. Lot was a child of light, but he did not walk in the light so as to enjoy God. If men love darkness, and abide in it, preferring it to the light, it just shews that they are children of the devil, and still under his authority. How we ought to thank God for that "hath." Now we come to the second.

Verse 13.—"Who *hath* delivered us from the power (authority) of darkness." What a deliverance! Rescued from that kingdom, its power broken, the love of darkness gone, and the only proper home of the saint, in God's light.

Verse 14.—"Who *hath* translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." This comes nearest to any New Testament word, in calling Christ our King. The

word most commonly used is "Lord," telling of His proprietorship of us, but here saints are said to be in His "kingdom." He is there to exercise His sway over us: to mould and fashion us according to His will, and to bring us into entire subjection to Him. And mark it is the "kingdom of the Son of His love." When He has perfectly subjugated us, and fashioned us according to His will, He will hand us over to the Father, and then we shall shine forth in "the kingdom of the Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). Our present place in the kingdom of the Son, shews that He has to break us in, and break us down, to become obedient. He, as a Son, "learned obedience (Heb. v. 9), and He will have us to be obedient too. There is the thought of responsibility all through this Epistle. He is our Master, and His word is, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me" (Matt. xi. 29). He uses crosses, loses, trials, temptations, all for this end. He is so interested in us. Earthly masters often seek their own interests alone in those under them. Not so our blessed Lord and Master. His interests and ours are identical. He has engaged to thoroughly subdue and fashion us unto Himself (Phil. iii. 20), to habituate us to obedience, and then to bring us home to God, where we shall not have a wish, or thought, or desire not according to His will. O how glad we shall be to get there, and have nothing in us to kick or rebel against the holy, blessed will of that good God who so loves us.

"The Son of His love." What an endearing expression! He is no tyrant, no hard master, but the One in whom God's heart delights, and who so loved His people as to give His life for them. It is an appeal to our affections. As if God had said—"Won't you yield to My beloved Son, and cannot you trust His love even if He breaks you down while He is subjugating you to His sway?" The Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon (chap. i. 9), compares His Bride to "a company of horses in Pharoah's chariots," costly, obedient, under control. A good horse needs little of the whip or the spur: a word or sign, and he is off. So may we be swift to move at the faintest whisper of His voice, and be led on as His Spirit guides in swift obedience to His word.

Verse 14.—"In whom we have redemption through His blood." What an effecting word to follow immediately after. Everything in the way of grace is perfect. He gave His blood to get us, and God would put that before us, as if to say—"You see how much you owe Him to begin with." This gives motive to yield to His rule, and love makes obedience easy. "Forgiveness of sins": all my sins gone through the blood, effectually and for ever. "I write unto you little children because your sins *are* forgiven you" (1 John ii. 12). If I sin as a child, I am told to confess my sin and I shall be forgiven, and restored to the enjoyment of the Father's ace in the light (1 John i. 9).

Verse 15.—"Who is the image of the invisible God." This first half of the verse refers to what Christ is toward God, the image of God. As John tells us, a God who can be seen, looked upon, handled (1 John i. 1). What a wonderful Being is the Lord Jesus! Well may we bow ourselves ever so humbly at His feet. "The first-born of every creature." This has occasioned a deal of difficulty among expositors. I believe the thought is, that in the mind of God, Christ existed as the pattern to which all were to be conformed. As some one has said—"He opened the womb of creation": God in a creature form. In Proverbs viii. 22-30, we get glimpses of the uncreated glories of Christ: our minds are too little to grasp them, but we can believe and adore. Only One truly and fully knows Him—"No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). He was Divine, the Eternal God, yet He would become human. A body was prepared for Him (Heb. x. 5): He is the God-Man. But blessed be God, we are yet to be made like Him, and to see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2).

Verse 16.—"By Him were all things created." This shews that He was not a mere creature, but Creator. All things were created "*by* Him, and *for* Him." How wonderful that a Being so infinitely great, should condescend to become our Redeemer and Lord: to acquire us, worthless as we are, and then to subdue and habituate us to obedience after the pattern of His

own. These verses make Redemption truly a magnificent thing. "Things in heaven, things in earth, visible and invisible." The "things in heaven," we do not know much about, but there is nothing there that does not owe its existence to Him. Various ranks of angels were all made by the wonderful Being whom we know as our Redeemer and our Lord. "All things became through Him, and without Him there was not one thing became that did become" (John i. 3). But for Him there would have been nothing but space. Just think of the sin of putting anything or anyone in the place of such a Christ.

Verse 17.—"By Him all things consist"—that is, cohere, or stand together. Were it not for that Christ, whom philosophers and great men despise, all things would tumble into a mass. Power proceeds from Him to keep every angel and every star in their ordered place. The first Servant God had, was His Son, and that Divine Servant made and upholds all things (Heb. i. 3).

Verse 18.—"He is the Head of the body the Church." Head of all authority here: Head of all fulness in Eph. i. 22, 23: Head of all affection in Eph. v. 23: three grand themes to think of. He will be equal to all His people's needs, here and hereafter. O, let us think of His authority, His fulness, and His love! "The first-born from the dead," literally, "out of the dead ones." He is the Beginning of a new order of creation. He originated the first creation: He is the

Beginning of the new (Rev. iii. 14). He is the First-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29): God will have many sons brought to glory (Rev. v. 6), but in all things He is to have "the pre-eminence." Creation is divided into three parts (Phil. ii. 10), all in heaven, earth, and hell shall yet be subjected unto Him. There is not an infidel or a scorner, but will have to bow at the Name of Jesus by and bye.

"That in all things He might have the pre-eminence," or be supreme. The wisdom of everyone else is to remember His nothingness, but we must never forget who the Lord Jesus is, and where God has placed Him now. God can never forget it, nor will He fail to claim for Him the honour due to Him there. Do we as saints really let the Lord Jesus always have "the pre-eminence?" Do we give Him the supreme place in our hearts and in our objects in life? God's way is to head up the creature in something higher, and He would have us own Him, refer everything to Him, and judge everything in His light. No more to be living to ourselves, but to make it our aim to be "well-pleasing unto Him."

Verse 19.—"For it seemed good that in Him should all fulness dwell." God as God you cannot see. If you would know Him, look at Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18). "God" here means Deity: God in the abstract (see 1 Tim. vi. 16). But the Son declared Him—told Him out. He is "the

brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 2). How wonderful are the words of 1 John iii. 2, in the light of this! "We shall see Him" not as now, but "as He is." What if I am empty: all fulness dwells in Him. We are the empty vessels into which He is pouring His mercy now (Rom. ix. 23), and His glory by and bye. Even now, His glory is being put into us, for we are "being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Verse 20.—The purpose of God is "to reconcile all things unto Himself." The next verse shews that God has made a beginning of this. Enemies once, yet "now hath He reconciled." What a beautiful "*now*" that is! Reconciliation means readjustment, for we had got away from God; our relationship with Him had been broken by sin. This the Lord Jesus through His death hath restored. Consider how far off we were. "Alienated and enemies." In Eph. iv. 18, "Alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them." Here it is "by wicked works." What a picture, of all the world too! How fit for hell each one of us was! "Yet *now* hath He reconciled." The "nows" of Scripture are very sweet (See Rom. viii. 1; Eph. ii. 13; 1 John iii. 2). How does He reconcile?

Verse 22.—"In the body of His flesh." This word occurs only here. It is a marvellous word. Such a contrast to "His body" in verse 24. There He speaks of "His body the Church," here of the body which was

prepared for Him (Heb. x. 5), in which He offered Himself to God (Heb. x. 10)—His literal body. Not "the body of His glory" He now has (Phil. iii. 20), or His mystic body the Church (Eph. i. 23), but "in the body of His flesh." It was the death of Christ upon the Cross and that alone, that wrought reconciliation. By that death, our relation with God is readjusted. On the Cross He was alone; there He bore our sins on His own body on the tree, and the awful wrath of God due to them, but in glory He will not be alone; His people, the members of His body, shall be with Him. "Things on earth and things in heaven" hath He reconciled. In Phil. ii. 10, "things under the earth" are included, because there it is Christ subjugating all things; even in hell, His Lordship must be owned. But here where it is *reconciling* all things, hell is left out. This is an important distinction, and disposes of the theory of the final restitution of the lost. "To present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in His sight." Holy, before God, blameless before others, and unreprovable by Satan. Present you, so that neither God, man, or devil shall find any flaw. He is going to present us up there in heaven "in His sight," right under His eye, and there in that uncreated light there shall not be a whisper against us. If you are not made fit for that, there is no heaven for you.

Verse 23.—Here is a word of exhortation and warning. It is like John xv. 10, "Continue ye": mind you

do not get "moved away": there is plenty to do it. "Grounded" means firmly joined to the foundation; "settled" denotes solid work after the foundation has been secured. In Eph. iii. 18, it is first the figure of a tree, hence the word is "rooted," then of a building, hence the word is "grounded," on a solid foundation. When we know that we are saved, then we can look forward. "The hope of the Gospel": not hoping to be saved, we know that we are saved already: but Christ is coming. This is the true attitude of the saints. "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 7). "Looking for that blessed hope" (Phil. iii. 20). "Be not moved away," implies there are many things to cause us to relax our hold on "the hope," then worldliness creeps in. "Continue in My love"—"Continue in the faith"—"Be not moved away from the hope." Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. ii. 20). He is coming again to receive me unto Himself (John xiv. 3): these are the two ends of God's dealings with us in grace. This is *the* hope: there is only one. "Now the God of *the* hope fill you" (Rom. xv. 13). It is "the hope of the Gospel," preached in all creation. It was to be spread in all directions, that all who are brought to believe in Him, may be looking for His coming (1 Thess. i. 10).

Verse 23.—There are two distinct ministries which Paul says were committed unto Him. Here a "minister" of the Gospel, in verse 25, a "minister" of the Church.

Verse 24 is very remarkable, coming as it does between. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25), and His true servants love that Church and suffer for it too. Not that they can ever suffer as He did, for in His sufferings at the hand of God, He stood alone, and bore all the wrath, but we can give ourselves —our time, our energy, our love, our prayers—in service for His Church. In suffering on behalf of His people and in serving them, we may be associated with Him. "Fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ." He has left us here to serve and to suffer for a little while. It is a great honour He has thus conferred upon us, and when we get home to glory, we shall rejoice that we have been counted worthy to suffer for His Name. He expects us to sympathize with His suffering people, and to suffer with and for them. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted," and as was the Head so ought the members to be. It is enough to make us love the wilderness, to have the privilege of suffering a little for Christ. Those who have gone to heaven cease to suffer. Some suffer more than others, serve more than others: theirs' will be a bright reward. God forbid that we should be uninterested spectators, looking on from a distance but taking no part in "the reproach of Christ." Now we are members of a suffering Christ, and should have hearts full of sympathy for the suffering saints of God: this is a great way of suffering. Paul suffered much in this way; his heart-sympathies were with the

saints. When he heard of any walking negligently, he wept bitter tears (Phil. iii. 18, 2 Cor. ii. 4): when he heard they were divided or troubled, it grieved his heart, and caused him to agonize (Col. ii. 1) and be in soul travail for them (Gal. iv. 20). Some only laugh at these things: the devil and the ungodly can do that. These are "the afflictions of Christ," for until the Church is glorified, His sympathies will be drawn out for her sorrows and her sufferings, and so ought ours to be.

Verse 25.—"The Church, of which I am made a minister." Paul was an evangelist to the world, a teacher to the saints: the former ministry is to the lost, with the Gospel for their salvation, the latter to the saved, with the Word for their edification. They are generally separate, but an evangelist should seek to have those whom he has been used to lead to Christ, led on and taught in the truth. "According to the stewardship of God which was given to me." This shews that God's ministers will have to give an account. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 1), not frittering away God's truth to pander to the ungodly. The parable of the unjust steward in Luke xvi. 1-13, is a warning to unsaved preachers: in the latter part of the chapter we see him in hell, with his tongue on fire. The Lord's own Word to the faithful one is, "Well done good and faithful servant" (Matt. xxv. 23)—not successful. Ours is to act faithfully, and be true to our Master, waiting for His commendation and reward.

Verses 26, 27.—That which was the great purpose of God in His heart from before the world began, is now made manifest. That mystery is the Church: "the riches of His glory," the grandest of all His mighty works. "Christ in you the hope of glory." This thought occurs thrice. He is our life (chap. iii. 3): He is all and in all (chap. iii. 11).

Verses 28, 29.—The object of true ministry is the growth and edification of the saints: to have every one fully established in Christ, and fully alive to the love God has to him in Christ, and of that glory which even now is revealed to the soul by beholding Christ at the right hand of God (2 Cor. iii. 18). Such a ministry can only be in the power of God, and in the agony of the soul.

Chapter II.

HERE we have a glance at the intense earnestness of Paul's service and of its aim and object. He prayed and agonised for saints whom he had never seen.

Verses 2, 3.—The way the Church is built up, is by saints being drawn together. The way of the acknowledgment of the mystery is by hearts being knit together. God is gathering and welding souls together, and the apostle is very anxious that none may be drawn away. He was in conflict, lest they might be divided in heart. God's way is to build His saints together by union of heart—in one spirit (Phil. i. 27). His way is to begin within (see Acts iv. 32). Two disciples walking to Emmaus, talking together with Christ, had their two hearts fused into one. "Did not our *heart* burn within us" (Luke xxiv. 32). So also in John xiv. 1, "Let not your *heart* be troubled." Acknowledging God's mystery is acting it out, so that the hearts of saints may be knit into one. "Knit together,"—interlaced: a spiritual thread joining them together. Not loving because you agree in this or that doctrine, but because you see Christ in each other. There will only be Christ to unite us in heaven. Let us be done with all else on earth.

Verse 4.—"Lest any man should delude you"—draw

you aside. There is such a tendency for saints to be drawn aside by enticing words, persuasive speech. So few there are who live on Christ, and care for the living reality of a living Christ.

Verse 5.—"Steadfastness of your faith towards Christ." This is the order: it is the order of the Holy Ghost. "Towards Christ": providing this is right, other things will fall into their places. Only as a man is full of Christ, can he be of any use. No wisdom of the flesh is of any value before God. It must be Christ first, and Christ last.

Verses 6, 7.—"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." That is, go on with Him getting increased knowledge of Him, accustoming yourselves to His presence, reckoning upon Him and obeying Him daily. There is all in Him you need. Creation came from His hand. All things are held together by Him. As you "received" Christ Jesus to be your Lord, so see in Him all that you need. "So walk in Him," saying, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want." Then the Holy Ghost explains how we are to "walk in Him." "Rooted and built up in Him." Christ the root, His precious work the foundation of our souls. As we grow, we see more and more the strength and security of that foundation: the soul is more and more taken up with Him and charmed with His perfect work. "In Him": not in frames and feelings, or in knowledge and attainments. Everything that God can

convey to the soul is in Christ. The more we learn our need, let us the more turn to Him: there we find all. As we see what we have there, we become rooted. As you read the Word, or hear the Word telling of the work of Christ, you are "built up." "And stablished in the faith": very few are stablished. It is distressing to hear of saints and even teachers drifting about, turning round and round like spiritual weather-cocks. Surely it all indicates a very feeble acquaintance with Christ. "In the faith." God has made known that to us. "The faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Therein are we to abide, and therein to "abound in thanksgiving."

Verse 8.—Here is a word of warning, how the fulness of Christ may be denied. "Philosophy and vain deceit." Think of any one preferring these to Christ. Philosophy will be poor stuff for a dying pillow; you will want Christ then, and you need Him now to live. Do your souls crave anything else? Do you sigh after intellectual discourses and traditional religion? The Holy Ghost says it is all "vain deceit"—mere fallacy.

Verse 9.—"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead." That is the strongest word possible in the Greek for "Godhead. There is everything in Christ. Just think of anyone turning from Him to "vain deceit"! And not only is there in Him all the fulness, but "ye are complete,"—filled full—"in Him." This is wonderful: too vast to comprehend. In Ephesians i. 23, the

Church is said to be "the fulness" of Christ; He cannot do without it. Here in Colossians, He is the fulness of the saints, and surely they cannot do without Him.

Verse 11.—"In whom ye are circumcised." Moses commanded that part of the flesh should be cut off; here all the flesh is cut clean out, and put off. It is a reference to the new creation, which the Holy Ghost here calls "a circumcision." "Putting off the body of the flesh"—the words "sins off" should be left out. The whole body is put off. "Ye are not in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 9). All that I was as a child of Adam, a sinner, I am cut out of: all that Christ is, I am before God. How the two fit together. I am cut off, am dead: I have no place, no standing before God, save in a Risen Christ. God wants us to live upon that fulness. Is it not enough? "Who is the Head of all principality and power." If He can fill all these intelligences in heaven, is He not enough for me? Here is the true circumcision, of which the circumcision in the flesh was but a shadow. We are still in the body, thank God, not in the flesh, although the flesh is still in us. "Putting off" is the same as is in verse 15, rendered "spoiled"—or stripping. As the grave-clothes were stripped off Christ when He rose, so has He delivered us. Everything hinges on the resurrection and the victory He won for us. "In the circumcision of Christ": that means the circumcision with which He circumcises us, and cuts us off from what we were.

Verse 12.—"Buried with Him in the baptism." It reminds us how all the waves and billows went over Him; how He cried, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing," and how the floods overflowed Him. Yet out from these waters (Psa. xviii. 16) He was brought, and out from the miry clay (Psa. xl. 2). This was first true of Christ; then of all who are His. "Buried with Him in the baptism." There is only one. As the believer goes down in the water, it is a symbol of how God has buried all that we were out of His sight.

Verse 12.—"Wherein also ye were raised with Him." These three things are infinitely precious. 1st—The blood of Christ has dealt with all my sins, and brought me into the presence of God (Eph. i. 13). 2nd—All that I am by nature, the Lord Jesus has cut me clean out of, so that I am no longer what I was. 3rd—In Christ risen, I am, and have His nature. He gives us the beautiful symbol of baptism to shew this forth. He went down in His baptism of suffering (Luke xii. 50), under the billows of God's wrath; we go down in the symbolic grave of baptism, and rise with Him to newness of life. All that I am by nature buried out of God's sight: all that Christ is before God, is now mine. The flesh is still in us, but that need not break our communion with God. With the two loaves baked with leaven, which were waved before Jehovah, there was offered a kid of the goats for a sin-offering, for their acceptance (Lev. xxiii. 17-22). These loaves are a type

of the Church, composed of Jew and Gentile, with sin still in its members, yet accepted, because of the work of Christ.

"Through the faith of the operation of God." Faith may seem simple in our account, but it is a marvellous feat in God's. When you believe, it shews God is at work in you. The more simply the soul drinks in what Christ is, the more is God's power at work in you. Faith is produced by the revelation of Christ to the soul; and the more the soul gazes on Christ thus revealed by the Holy Ghost, the more the life flows into it. "Raised Him out from the dead ones."

Verse 13.—"Quickened together with Him." If I believe on Him, my faith may be tiny, yet I am risen with Him. I have His life. I have fellowship, that is partnership, with Him. He and I have the same life; His life is mine. Verse 12 tells what we have been brought out of; verse 13 shews what we have been brought into "with Him." This is delightful! It is always true, not only when you are talking to Christ; then you may be enjoying it more; but the thing itself is a fact always. There is a slight difference in English between "communion" and "fellowship." Communion denotes intercourse; fellowship, companionship, society. They are one word in Greek—community. Whether I enjoy it or not, God has seen to it; He has secured it. Blessed be God, He has raised His people with Christ, and there in Him risen, they are a new creation.

There is no condemnation: how could there be in Christ? There is nothing to condemn. My sins? Christ bore them all away. My nature? Christ circumcised it. All has gone. Christ and His members alone remain before God. What a blessed standing the believer has! What a place of nearness! Christ must needs have a people meet for Him, companions worthy of Him. He the Living One died, that we the dead ones might live. Now He is our life, our fulness, our everything.

"Having forgiven you all trespasses." What sweetness is in that expression! In death, Christ made atonement for sin; in resurrection, they are all gone. Is there a sin there on Christ? Not one; then there is not one on me. "*Having forgiven* you all"—not a part, but a whole. Blessed assurance! There are no sweeter passages in the Word than these two, "Having forgiven you all trespasses," "Hath He quickened together with Him." The possession of life proves the removal of sin; for it is resurrection life. Christ then is risen, and we are out of our sins and quickened together with Him. Every time you act faith, it shews you have life. Would you be a healthy Christian? Then act faith in a living Christ, and "abundance of life" will flow into you.

"*All* trespasses." Who would like to part with that little yet great word, "all"? I was thinking how great God is, to be able to call these starry worlds into existence out of nothing. But He has done a more

wonderful thing still. He has put my many sins out of existence. They are all gone, gone to return no more. God says, I will not remember them (Heb. x. 14).

Verse 14.—"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against *us*." There is a change in the pronoun. In verse 13, it is "you"; in verse 14, "us." This is a clue to the interpretation. The same change occurs in Gal. iv. 5, 6, "we" Jews, "you" Gentiles. So here Paul speaks as a Jew, the handwriting was "against *us*." The law was given to Jews, not Gentiles (Rom. ii. 8; Eph. ii. 14-17). All that the law can do for man is to be against him. The law has dominion over a man as long as he liveth (Rom. vii. 1-4); but we have died, and its claims are ended. How foolish for saints to put themselves under it as their rule of life! We are to live to another, even to Him who is risen. Instead of L-A-W, it is not L-O-R-D. "Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. iii. 8). He forgives my trespasses, and blots out the law. "Took it out of the way," as between Jew and Gentile (Eph. ii. 14), nailing it to His Cross. Not merely the ten commandments, but the "ordinances" were all "contrary to us," casting down the timid, and puffing up the self-righteous. When God rent the veil of the temple in the midst, the priests were wicked enough to sew it together again no doubt. So people now prefer to keep at a distance, while God invites them to draw near.

"Took it out of the way"—that is a very vivid expression. It means it is not wanted, it only opposed us.

Verse 15.—"Having spoiled principalities." The word "spoiled" here is the same as verse 11, "put off"; it means properly, stripping off, and only occurs once again in Scripture (chap. iii. 8). It refers to the Lord Jesus stripping off His grave clothes. "Made a show of them openly"; openly, refers to the Cross. In the moment of His greatest weakness, He achieved all this. What can He not do now that He has risen, with all power in His hand? "He liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor. xiii. 6). "Triumphing over them in Himself." He had to cope with sin, death, the devil and his angels, single-handed, and He did it. Oh, what we owe to Him and to His Cross! It is very grand to know that He triumphed even there.

"By weakness and defeat, He won the meed and crown;
Trod all our foes beneath His feet, by being trodden down."

He did all this for us when He was "emptied" (Phil. ii. 7). What can He not do now, that He is "glorified"? (John vii. 38).

Verse 16.—"Let no man therefore judge you," &c. All these were but shadows; Christ is the substance. Why, then, go after shadows any longer? The Sabbath was typical of rest. Christ is the true rest of God, and God calls us to rest in Him. The Sabbath was the shadow; Christ spent it in the grave, and this earth has not had another since. In these verses, 16, 17, the Holy Ghost shews how the fulness of Christ may be

practically denied, by going back to shadows. May we heed the warning; it is much needed in our time.

Verse 18.—"Let no man beguile you of your reward." It is quite possible to miss it (Rev. iii. 12), or part of it (2 John 10). Here it is by a ceremonial or ritualistic worship: a worship that was instituted through the instrumentality of angels (see Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53). God had an earthly tabernacle, and people could then draw nigh to Him on earth. Now that has gone, His people are called with a heavenly calling (Heb. iii. 1), and their only place of worship is in heaven itself (Heb. x. 17). Oh, to draw near to God there! To come before Him and worship there! "Intruding into those things which he hath seen." Four of the oldest Greek MSS. leave out the word "not." In other words, a religion of sense; ritualism and ordinances, which men can look at and handle, instead of having to do with things unseen. Heavenly things are only visible to faith. We have a Great High Priest, but He is unseen. The Holy Ghost is ours, but unseen. Faith grasps both, and makes them real to the soul. Do not let any one cheat you by bringing you down to a religion of rites and ceremonies, or soliciting your return to Judaism. Here we are reminded that its rites were only shadows. Now Christ is risen. It is a solemn warning to saints, to beware of very much that is everywhere around them, very popular too, of high esteem among men. "Vainly puffed up." How true this is! How much pride often lurks under

a garb of assumed humility? And religious pride and vanity are the worst of all.

Verse 19.—"Not holding the Head." The true and only remedy is to have, individually and consciously, to do with Christ the Head. This alone will keep saints right in soul, and with each other. Anything merely external is Popery, Ritualism, Formality. "From which all the body." The entire body is to live off the Head; there is enough in Him for all; for in Him all the fulness dwells. Oh, it is grand to have such a Head, in Whom all that His people need, is treasured for them. "Having nourishment," implies that we need constant supplies, and that nutriment is constantly flowing down from the Head to His Church below. "By joints and bands"; any and all who are raised up and fitted by Him as channels of ministry to His people. "Knit together"—a beautiful word, mentioned before in verse 2, and also in Eph. iv. 16, where it is rendered "compacted." It speaks to us of the close and vital union of those who are Christ's. Nourished from the Head, we shall see those who are the members of the body in the light of His love for them, and as those who are to be loved and served, because they are His. Thus shall saints, loving with His love, become of "one heart," and ministering His Word from Him, they shall become of "one mind."

Verse 20-22—"If ye have died." This is the proper rendering; so also in chap. iii. 3. This is God's remedy

for all fleshly piety and carnal religion. The Cross is the end of a worship of outward form. Saints have died with Christ. A new life and a new nature is theirs now, and nothing but a living Christ can satisfy. A living Christ to live upon. Is He not enough? Do you want worldly religion along with Him? If I get down to a religion of sense, Christ is lost sight of. His fulness is denied. The more we live by faith upon the living Christ, the more do we grow and our capacities increase. The more His fulness flows in, the more do our vessels become enlarged. "The rudiments of the world," the same word as in Gal. iv. 9, the "weak and beggarly elements"—a religion of the flesh and the world, with its commands and prohibitions—"Touch not, taste not, handle not." The believer in Christ has passed out from all that belongs to the world and the flesh, into a new sphere, where Christ is everything.

Verse 23.—"Will-worship," same word as verse 18; "voluntary" worship, people exercising their own wills, doing what pleases themselves. Is there not a lot of this in our day? A religion that pleases the natural mind is what men run after. What pleases God is to do His will, not our own, and to bring everything to the test of His Word. A living Christ in the heavens unseen, yet loved, is to be the object of our hearts. "To the satisfying of the flesh"; it finds its satisfaction in religious forms as well as in coarser things (See Eph. ii. 2); but the new nature can only be satisfied with Christ.

Religious forms and ceremonies—Judaism then and Ritualism now—are of no value against the passions of the flesh. Man's way of safeguard is by placing various restraints and negations of evil, "Handle not, touch not, taste not," which is the proper order of the words—a descending climax. God's way is by "stripping off the body of the flesh" through death and resurrection with Christ, giving us a new life, a new nature, and a continual flow of nourishment for that new life direct from the Risen Head in Heaven. Oh that God's people may see how their all is in Christ, how He claims as Head and Lord their confidence and their obedience, and how all worldly and fleshly forms of religion deny Him that honour, and rob the saints of the present blessing and future reward by beguiling them from Christ. What was to keep these Colossian saints from human philosophy, and a recurrence to ordinances, man's natural religion, and religious man's traditions, Rationalism and Ritualism, was a fuller knowledge and a firmer hold of Christ. If the heart is really satisfied with Him, drawing from Him, there will be no desire to wander about after the allurements of the world.

"Jesus, Thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill."

Chapter III.

"IF ye then be risen with Christ." The word "if" does not imply doubt; it means, "Since ye then were raised." It is the common portion of all saints, and we are to regulate and correct our walk according to our standing. "Ye are risen"—that is a fact. God has accomplished this for us; it is His work. He it was who raised up Christ (Rom vi. 7), and us together with Him (Eph. ii. 6). Faith believes God; it feeds upon His Word. "Risen with Christ"—three little words easily uttered, but O, how full of meaning! The allusion is to chap. ii. 11-13, where we are said to be dead, buried, and risen with Him. Already we are there with Him in our spirits, and very soon our bodies shall be where our spirits are. "Seek those things which are above." In Ephesians, saints are said to be already "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"—here they are to "seek" them. Both are true. Already they are ours in Christ, and God would have us enter into the present possession and enjoyment of them by faith. "Seek those things." They are quite within our reach, the proper element in which we are to live and move and have our being. They are our own; things below are not. The Lord says, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall

give you that which is your own?" (Luke xvi. 12). Heavenly things, "those things which are above," are our own; the things of this world are not our own, they are only entrusted to us as stewards, and we should use them in service to Him. God would have us swayed by "things above"; drawn more and more towards them, as our only real abiding treasures; and, truly, where the treasure is, there the heart will be also. Thus it was with the patriarchs of whom we read in Heb. xi. They had their hearts set with desire upon "a better country, that is an heavenly" (verse 16), therefore, they were content to be strangers and pilgrims here, dwelling in tents. And so should we, knowing that God will not disappoint us, but give all that He has promised.

Verse 2.—"Set your affection"—margin, "your mind": judge them according to their proper value. A man would be unwise if he valued copper as much as gold.

Faith brings future things into the present, and puts present things into the past: faith beholds unseen things, and lives on them. It values the favour of God above everything, and sees all the world's false glory in God's own light. "Mind these things"—to look at things in the light of God's throne, and to get His judgment about things here, is heavenly-mindedness. The apostle then gives a beautiful clue why our affection should tend heavenward. "Where Christ sitteth." Is He not our Treasure, our Portion, the Lover of our souls? He it is "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). He loved us then; He loves us still, and He will love His own who are in the world unto the end. Would it not be strange if such a Lover did not want His people's love back again? "Set your affection" where Christ is. It is such a powerful appeal to our hearts. Surely, if Christ uplifted on the Cross has drawn our hearts to Him (John xii. 32), how much more should the living, loving Christ on the throne? How we ought to be humbled, that we are so little drawn and moved by that love of His. Oh! just to think that we need to have His love pressed on our hearts by the Holy Ghost, in order to produce any response at all. Some flowers open more quickly to the sun than others, and so do some hearts to the love of Christ. He compares His people to a garden enclosed, and says: "I have come into my garden," there to gather His pleasant fruits. (Song v. 1). Oh! may He not be disappointed in finding them gone. He values our love, and delights to gather the fruits of that love in us.

"Not on things on the earth." This is to guard us against those things that would obstruct us in our seeking after things above, that would be a hindrance and a dead weight weighing us downward. The more we allow our affection to be set on earthly things, the more do they become dead to things above. "Who mind earthly things," (Phil. iii. 19.) was a condition that caused Paul to weep for others. Here the command is found twice.

In verse 1 "seek," in verse 2, "mind" things above; and the negative "not on things on earth," is to encourage us to let our souls be drawn heavenwards. If these appeals do not move us, we must be in a very unspiritual state. Oh! let us study Christ on the throne, with unveiled face beholding Him there for us, until our hearts go out and up to Him there in response to His love for us. "Where Christ sitteth." This is an important word. He speaks to God. "Who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 34.) This is something beyond His sitting down. He is interceding for us. His work as sin-bearer is finished, and He is seated (Heb. i. 3), but His intercessory work goes on, until we are bodily where He is.

Verse 3.—"For ye have died." This dogmatic assertion on the part of God is very grand. It is true of all who believe. The actual moment you believed in Christ, you were reckoned by God as dead, buried, and alive in Him. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Meantime Christ is hid. Wonderful statement! As He went up, He was "seen of angels" (1 Tim. iii. 16), but He is not yet worshipped by angelic beings as we see He will be in Rev. v. 11. He is at present "hid in God"—the hidden manna (Rev. iii. 17), but one day, God will bring Him forth, first to receive us to Himself, and to be made like Him (John xiv. 3, 1 John iii. 2), then to be worshipped by angels (Heb. i. 6). Meanwhile, He is hidden from sight, but by faith we can say: "We see Jesus" (Heb. ii. 10). "Your life is hid"—it is safe in God's keeping.

No man can pluck you out of Christ's hand, or out of the Father's hand. (See John x. 28, 29.) We are doubly secure. What a mercy! Sometimes the life in us may get a chill, but it can never perish—it can never be put out.

Verse 4.—"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear." He is coming again, but not alone. Next time the world sees Him, His saints will be with Him. When He appears, they appear; all together, and with Him. He never will be seen alone again. Alone He died (John xii. 24), but now in resurrection, God has given Him a body and many members. He is the First-born of many brethren (Rom. viii. 17), and when He appears again, they will all appear with Him. What a joy to the heart in a world of sorrow and sin as this is! And see how the Holy Ghost delights in squeezing in, as it were, to this grand statement, such a volume of precious truth. He might have said simply: "When Christ shall appear," but that does not satisfy Him. He says: "When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear." Here He is speaking of the source of life; it is in God's Son up there, and from Him it is constantly flowing down to us: flowing out from Him, and flowing in to us. John tells us: "He showed me a river of water of life" (Rev. xxii. 1) proceeding out from God and the Lamb. What fulness of life is there! Until that river is dried up, the life will never be exhausted. When He comes, the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we shall be changed and caught up (1 Thess. iv. 14-17). Before God can look at our works,

He will look at Christ's, and in virtue of that work, all who have trusted it, will be lifted up to Heaven and set down in His presence, one as much as another. Associated with Christ now, we stand on the same footing as He does; "accepted in the Beloved." We are risen with Him now; we shall appear with Him then. "In glory." Glory is not yet manifested: it is only known to faith. Grace has already appeared (Titus ii. 10), and we are looking for the appearing of the glory (Titus ii. 12). What a sight that will be! I used to wonder if there was anything in Scripture about the risen saints excelling in strength, as we read the angels do. (See Psalm civ. 20). Now I see that glory and power are combined: "Strengthened with all might according to the power of the glory" (Col. i. 11). "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21). Oh! how different we shall be then, to what we are now! Is it not enough to uplift and cheer our hearts, and make them sing:

> "We expect a bright to-morrow,
> All shall be well."

God has called us to His "eternal glory" (1 Peter v. 9), and although we may have to wait for it a little, and learn patience, yet it is just as sure, as God has promised it.

Verses 5-7.—"Mortify therefore your members." One use of the glory is to teach us to deny the flesh, to give it no place, not to give way to its lusts. As we get glimpses of that glory to which we are going, they nerve

us to be in arms against all that is of the flesh. And see what a lot there is to deal with. That long black list in verse 5, does not exhaust them all; there is another in verse 8; and we are to use the glory against both. We are to live so in the beams of that glory, that we will not give way to these things. In the days of our former life they were natural to us, but now that we have Christ's life flowing into us, and the glory before us, they are to be stripped off.

Verse 8.—Each of these words has a definite meaning. "Anger," refers to temper. "Wrath," to temporary bursts of passion. "Malice" is worse, it is malignity. "Blasphemy," is injuring the good name of another, from *blas*—burst; *pheme*—fame; it comes very near to our word "slander." God would have us give the whole of them a thorough turn out. If the glory gets into us, and fills us, it will soon turn them all out. To be filled with the anticipations of glory will influence our lives. Stephen looked up and saw the glory, and it led him to pray: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," and doubtless the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, was the answer to that prayer.

Verses 9, 10.—The argument here is, "you have put off the old man with his deeds," now put on the new man which is being renewed in one sense, by beholding the Lord Jesus, in another sense by practice. Nothing tends to make us more gracious than practising grace, more Christlike, than walking as He walked.

Verse 11.—"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew." There is a distinct thought in each of these couplets, "Greek nor Jew." Civil distinction is lost; both are one in Christ (Eph. ii. 15). "Circumcision or uncircumcision"—religious distinction is lost. (Eph. ii. 11). "Barbarian, Scythian"—national distinction is gone. "Bond or free"—social distinction is blotted out. And the grand reason given is, "Christ is all, and IN all." How soon these barriers and distinctions are gone, when "Christ is all." How quickly love springs up when Christ is seen "in all." Christ is in all these renewed men, whatever their national, religious or social distinctions may have been before, and our wisdom is, to seek to discern Christ in every one of them. Walking in the Spirit, it is not so difficult to know who is a Christian. In one who has only a spark of grace, and a great deal of the flesh, it requires grace to see it, and tests the measure of grace we have, for it is easy to see grace in a mellow Christian. These exhortations rebuke us, and they ought to put down our pride and self-esteem. That Christ alone may be "all, and in all."

Verse 12.—"Put on therefore as the elect of God." This is a passage for the heart. It should make us glow with love to one another. What a beautiful life it will make, if carried out. There is a great deal here to practice. A beautiful way of reading the word, is to think over it and then pray about it, until the Word gets into us. The expression "Put on," refers to the putting on

of a new garment. At first, it does not seem to fit very well, but as we use it, it fits better. So these things enumerated here, are unnatural to us as "in the flesh." Just think of living such a life as these verses speak of before we were renewed! But now we are "elect of God, holy and beloved." What wonderful names are these! As those whom God has chosen, loved, sanctified, love one another. If you are prone to act towards a brother in anger, wrath, or malice, let these words "elect of God, holy and beloved," glitter on his brow as you look at him. Christ is in him. Who would want to lie to Christ? Even if you could deceive Him, you would not surely like to do so to the One who loves you so much, and is doing so much for you. As we put on these things, the new nature in us is "renewed," the new life is developed and strengthened. Practice these things, and as you practice, it becomes habit, and habit makes it easy. "Bowels of mercies"—such a full word. The same is used of the Lord Jesus. He was "moved with compassion." Kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness. long suffering." God esteems these things, and He would have us practice them. Put them on is said to all saints. God does not think any of us are so kind or so meek as we ought to be, or might be, so He bids us put them on,

Verse 13.—"Forbearing one another." The Lord has a deal to bear with our naughtiness. We should seek ever to remember this; it will help us to forbear with one another. "Forgiving one another." "Forbearing" is a

passive word; "forgiving," an active one. "Forbearing," looks at patient endurance in one's own soul; "forgiving," looks at the grace shown to others. "Forgiving yourselves," as it may be rendered. When a saint is not kind and gentle to other saints, he is like a man who hits himself. "If any man have a quarrel against any." Two Christians of different temperaments may quarrel, but they should not nurse wrath, else it will grow into malice. Forgive, "as Christ forgave." What a pattern of forbearance and forgiveness is Christ!

Verse 14.—"Above all these things put on charity—love." Here is a spiritual "overall" for saints to wear. You may have to show forbearance and to exercise forgiveness, to show humbleness of mind and other graces, but always let the "overall" of love be seen. Love, "the bond of perfectness," or that which binds together and completes all the rest. The figure of the dress is dropped, and the chain is suggested, drawing saints together. The tip-top of perfection is love. It is the chief part of our outfit, and it well becomes us as the children of God to be habited in love, and different from the world. Children in the gutters, are not dressed like children in the palace. As the children of God, "holy and beloved," we are to put on these things, and to walk about with them on us daily.

Verses 15, 16.—These verses have special reference to the saints as gathered together. "Let the peace of God," or rather "the peace of Christ" (R.V.): that peace

in which He ever walked while here below. "My peace," as in John xvi. 27. "Let the peace of Christ rule"—that is arbitrate—"in your hearts, to the which also ye were called." Instead of jarring, contending, striving to be uppermost, hear the voice of the Lord saying: "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. v. 13.) "In one body:" put together by God, not to live isolated, monastic lives, but in true living fellowship as members of Christ, and members one of another.

Verse 16.—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." It is still the thought of the one body, not the saints in isolation, but together. Verse 14, is 1 Corinthians, chapter xiii., epitomised, showing the supremacy of love, and its uppermost place among the saints. Then verse 15, is like 1 Corinthians xii., telling of the body of Christ in its unity, and the one Spirit pervading the whole. Verse 16, is an epitome of 1 Corinthians xiv., each having that Divine sympathy for the other, and then comes the ministering one to another. Oh! it is so beautiful when the saints of God are thus filled with the love, the peace, and the Word of Christ, all loving and sympathizing with, and ministering to each other.

Verse 17.—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed." Words and deeds alike may edify. What a calling! A kind act, or a word of rebuke, both are alike to be "in the Name of the Lord Jesus." If you cannot do it in that Name, then you should not do it at all. You should

be able to look up from your service, "giving thanks unto the Father by Him" everywhere and always. What a calling! What lives ours as the children of God and the servants of Christ, ought to be. Then follows some particular directions to us as the saints of God in our earthly relationships. These are not beneath His notice.

Verse 18.—"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." When dealing in grace, the Lord always begins with the least. He addresses wives before husbands, children before parents, servants before masters. Authority and subordination are both to be recognised as His way. When this is ignored or set aside, then there is confusion. When wives rule over their husbands, and children lead their parents, all is upside down, there is no rule, no subjection, such as is here enjoined. It is like the great image of Daniel, chapter ii., whose feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, a true picture of the democracy of these last days. God's plain commandments set aside, and everybody doing what they will, and what pleases themselves. May it be characteristic of us to love all these His precepts, and to do all that He here tells us. There is nothing more pleasing to God than obedience, even in such matters as these. Has He not told us in His own Word, that Jesus went down to Nazareth, and was subject to His earthly parents there (Luke ii. 51), just to show us, how pleasing to Him such subjection is. There are three injunctions given to heads of households: as husbands, fathers, and masters.

Verse 19.—"Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Love, according to the love of Christ for His Church (Eph. v. 25), is to be rendered, and no bitterness. Not only is the positive, but also the negative side given.

Verse 21.—"Fathers provoke not your children." They are not only to love, to care for and guide, but also to take care not to grieve them unnecessarily. It is thus that God as a Father deals with His children, and He would have earthly fathers to do as He does. How kind of the Lord to put in a word like that. It shows that nothing escapes His notice. An earthly father may expect too much from his child, and this is to guard against provoking till he is discouraged. If that is done, the Lord will let him hear of it at His judgment-seat. See how frequently the title "Lord" occurs in these verses! So surely as there is a Lord over us, shall we have each to give an account to Him at His judgment-seat of how we obeyed these precepts.

Verses 22-25.—How remarkable are these four verses addressed to servants! The Holy Ghost seems to enlarge the word so as to include all the saints as being the servants of Christ, and ends with a solemn word in anticipation of the judgment-seat of Christ.

Verse 23.—"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord." How good of Him to accept such service. However menial its character, if done as unto Him, He will reward it. What a word of cheer this is to those who

are serving hard and unreasonable masters. In serving them well in the fear of God, with singleness of heart, He accepts it as done unto Him. How this lifts up the meanest drudgery to the highest service. "Ye serve the Lord Christ." Could you have a better Master? The Holy Ghost thus brings the highest motives to sway us in the smallest matters of everyday life. What a real thing it makes life to be, to learn that He takes notice of the commonest details of it, and reckons them up as service done to Him. Truly, the Word of God is like no other book; it takes note of what men would pass over, and leaves out as unworthy of record, things that we would make a deal of.

Verse 24.—"Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance." It is "an inheritance," yet a "reward." These feeble attempts to serve the Lord Jesus will receive a reward, yet out of all proportion. Just think of your little bits of service receiving from the Lord the "reward of the inheritance." What a grand thing to live for and serve such a Master. Surely life is worth living to a man who knows he is saved, who knows he is a child of God, who knows he has a home in heaven, and that for all true service rendered to the Lord here, he shall receive hereafter "the reward of the inheritance." When we sing about the coming of the Lord, let us not be impatient, but go on working and warring "till He come."

> "So now to watch, to work, to war,
> And then to rest for ever."

It sheds a halo of glory on everyday life to know that God is taking so much account of it.

Verse 25.—"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong." Undoubtedly there will be such a thing as suffering loss at the judgment-seat of Christ. Any unfaithfulness in these relationships, any failure as the servants of Christ, will have a corresponding loss of reward. It is no question of salvation, or of being in heaven. These are secured by grace alone, but wrong-doing in regard to these commandments of the Lord, which He has given for our obedience while here as servants in His kingdom, will bring loss to us at the manifestation of our works. Everything will come up for review at His judgment-seat, and some will have a less reward than others. The word "Colosse" means "clipped," and in this Epistle the saints are reminded that unfaithfulness to Christ will "clip" the reward hereafter. Oh! to hear and heed that solemn warning word of His—"Let no man beguile you of your reward" (chap. ii. 18). It will give the Lord great joy to give His "well done" and a full reward to all His faithful servants. Do not "clip" yourselves of it, or deprive Him of that joy.

The placing of this solemn word at the close of the section dealing especially with social relationships and matters of daily life, shews that obedience to the Lord in these will gain His reward. Reward is too often connected with great success in some public sphere, but it is not so in the Word of God. "Well done, good and

faithful servant"—not great and successful. "Thou hast been faithful over a *few* things," such as are mentioned in this chapter as part of the commandments of our Lord. Oh, to be ever on the alert to obey Him, to render service to Him even in the very humblest and most commonplace matters of life.

Chapter IV.

VERSE 1.—"Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal." Servants, even slaves, are not to be trampled on; however humble their station, they are dear to the Lord. They are not therefore to be wronged. Such matters are not too trifling for the Holy Ghost to write about, and we ought to heed them. How many bright touches there are in the Epistle to Philemon on domestic relations. Paul not only writes to Philemon, but to Apphia, for, as their servant Onesimus had robbed his master, his wife, being one with her husband, and sharing all with him, had a right to know all about it. "Knowing that you have a Master in heaven." He would have us spend the little while of our service here under His eye, ever having the judgment-seat in view, where we must give an account to Him.

Verse 2.—"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." This is the first precept addressed to the saints under this head. He had been shewing the Lordship of Christ in creation, in the Church, and how they are to remember Him in the social circle as wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, masters. Now He says: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." It contains a hint, that when we are in prayer, we are continually tempted to have our thoughts drawn away. Therefore,

"watch"—give strict attention. Watch for the time of prayer; do not neglect it, and watch also when in prayer (1 Pet. iv. 7). "With thanksgiving." We are so selfish, that we tell the Lord our needs and troubles, but often forget to thank Him for His blessings and deliverances.

Verse 3.—"Praying for us." We ought to pray for the servants of God, to hold up their hands, especially those who have gone forth "for the Name, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 9), and for those through whose ministry our souls have received benefit. "That God would open unto us a door of utterance." Doors opened by Him no man can shut (Rev. iii. 12). Things everywhere portend the time is near, when He will close the door (Luke xii. 35). "The mystery of the Christ," the Church up there and down here all one in Christ, that great mystery of which he had been made a minister, which had been revealed to him (Eph. iii. 6-10). "For which I am also in bonds." It was no child's play to speak God's truth, and to act according to it then. Thank God, we live in easier times, and can speak the truth without fear; but "the reproach of Christ" remains, and obedience to His will as our Lord and Master will still bring out the world's opposition in some way.

Verse 5.—"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." Take care how you walk before outsiders, lest by your folly or selfishness you stumble them. It is sad to think how many of the unsaved have been hindered and stumbled, by the inconsistent walk of Christians.

What a solemn word—"them that are without." Outside Christ, outside the kingdom, outside heaven; all but in hell. Such is their position. Let us take it to heart, and walk wisely before them. "Redeeming the time," that is buying opportunities, even going out of our way to get an opportunity to speak for Christ. Count no trouble too great, no sacrifice too costly, to get an opportunity for bearing witness to the Lord Jesus.

Verse 6.—"Let your speech be always with grace." What a rebuke this is, to much of the conversation of Christians! "Always with grace." In order to do this we must have much communion with God, and be abiding in Christ! It is possible even to talk of mundane matters in such a way, as men may see that we have been with Jesus.

"Seasoned with salt:" that is truth. Grace and truth must be combined: they always were in the speech of the Lord Jesus. Look at Him in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv. 18-25). While He spoke of grace, they wondered at "the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth," but when He added "I tell you of a truth," they sought to hurl Him over the brow of the hill. Some are fond of hearing words of grace, telling of the promises *to* and the privileges *of* saints, but they do not like to hear of the precepts and commandments of the Lord, given for His peoples' obedience. They like Ephesian grace, much better than Colossian responsibility. But those who speak must not tone down the truth to suit th

ears of those who hear, but deal out God's grace and truth in due proportion, giving each a portion "in due season."

Verse 7.—From verse 7 onward, we have a description of the characters and service of seven individuals, and they are given here as representative persons. We are to regard them as anticipations of the Lord's servants before the coming judgment-seat; a suitable and solemn ending of this Colossian Epistle, in which we learn so much of the present Lordship of Christ, and the obedience of His saints and servants, with reward or loss in that coming day. Tychicus is first. A beautiful character is given to him, "a beloved brother, a faithful minister and fellow-servant *in the Lord*." Coming from the Holy Ghost, this is a good commendation. How grand to hear from the Master's lips at His judgment-seat: "Well done."—Bravo—"good and faithful servant." Would you rather have that, or the clapping of hands and eclat of thousands of people? Perhaps you will say: "Both may go together." No, they cannot. Look at Demas, the popular man, the man who loved the present world (2 Tim. iv. 10), and was doubtless loved by it, how his name appears last (verse 14), without a single word of approval or of praise by the Holy Ghost. Saved he may have been, but no more. It reminds us of Deuteronomy, chapter xxxiii., where the name of Simeon is omitted. The tribe bearing that name no doubt entered the goodly land, but owing to their conduct in the wilderness (see

Numb. xxv.) there is not one word of praise given them here. There is such a thing as being saved, yet so as by fire (1 Cor. iii. 15), escaping, as Job says, as "by the skin of the teeth" (Job xix. 20). What a contrast between Tychicus and Demas! Then observe the order in which the Holy Ghost commends Tychicus. "A beloved brother, a faithful minister (servant), and a fellow-servant in the Lord." A brother before a servant. All God's children are in the circle of love, although all may not be faithful in service. Mark, it is not successful, but "faithful." What men call "success" is very often not what the Lord commands, or what He will commend in that day. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 2).

Verse 8.—Paul had not seen the saints at Colosse personally, nor had he been the means of their conversion; yet he cared for them, and was anxious to know their state, and to help and comfort them. This shows how we ought to love and care for God's saints and servants wherever they are found.

Verse 9.—"Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you." He had been converted through Paul's instrumentality at Rome. He had been a sorrow to Philemon, his earthly master (Philem. 10, 11), but since his conversion had turned out well. "A faithful and beloved brother." What a joy for Paul to write such words, to those who had known him best in his unconverted days. How happy when one who has been

outrageous is saved, and goes on well. Alas! many professed converts in our day do not go on well, but the reverse.

Verses 10, 11.—Mark, who had once been a cause of trouble to the Apostle (Acts xv. 38, 39) had now become a "comfort" to him, and profitable for service (2 Tim. iv. 2). This is very striking, and it shows that Paul's severity towards him, as shown in Acts, had done him good. It brought Mark to a sense of his naughtiness and indolence, and at last we see him restored to the Apostle, and to his place of service. Though Paul's attitude towards him seems severe, he would, no doubt, eat the sin-offering (Lev. x. 11) about him in secret, and the lessons Mark then learned were salutary and helpful to his growth in grace.

Verse 11.—"Jesus, who is called Justus." "Jesus," was a common name then among the Jews, as Joshua is now. It gradually got into disuse after the Lord was pleased to take that name. He had evidently three names (Acts i. 23). These were all "of the circumcision." What a nice word that is for the Holy Ghost to write. "They of the circumcision" (Titus i. 10) were not generally helpers of Paul, but these were his "fellow-workers unto the Kingdom of God" and "a comfort." How blessed to have such work-fellows in the service of the Lord! Then follow three from among the Gentiles.

Verse 12.—"Epaphras, who is one of you." Not your minister, although he had been the means of their

conversion (ch. i. 7), but "one of you"—all put together. How different are the dissenting and clerical notions of our day! "Always labouring fervently in prayer." Epaphras was not content to know that they were saved. He agonised in prayer that they might stand complete in all the will of God. To be saved is the beginning, to go on in the knowledge of God's will, walking in His ways, is next.

Epaphras prays here as Paul had done (chap. i. 9). He had been with Paul and had learned the importance of the second character of his ministry, "to fulfil"—complete—"the Word of God." Epaphras had learned more of this than he knew when he was with them at Colosse, and he "strives earnestly," agonizes in prayer for the saints, that they may be "fully assured of all the will of God." What a lovely service for fellow-saints! And not only for those well known to him at Colosse, of whom he himself was one, but he had much labour for the saints in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Do we pray much for fellow-believers, not asking great or impossible things for them, but that they may know and be fully assured of the will of God, seeking to walk in obedience to the Lord's commandments?

Verse 14.—"Luke, the beloved physician"—Paul's companion in travel (Acts xxi. 8), and fellow-labourer (Philem. 24), who remained faithful to the end (2 Tim. iv. 2)—"and Demas, greet you." There is a word of praise for all but Demas. His name means "popular," and the

likelihood is, he was popular among men. But what avails this in God's sight? "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15). It is of this man that the aged Apostle, in prison, nearing his end, has to write,—"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10). It ought to read "this present age:" the word in the Greek is not the same as in John iii. 16, "God so loved the world." It is well to remember this, as otherwise we might infer that Demas was a lost soul. He loved the present age, and was, no doubt, allured by its caresses, from the path of companionship with the prisoner of the Lord, and from the reproach of Christ.

Verse 16.—Notice the word "*from* Laodicea." It is believed to refer to the Epistle to the Ephesians. Laodicea was near to Ephesus, and it is very natural to suppose that the Epistle written by the Apostle to the saints at Ephesus, would be handed about and read, as there were churches springing up in all parts. So this Epistle to the Colossians was to be read in the church of the Laodiceans. "Cause it to be read," says the Holy Ghost. What is the lesson to us? Always to combine Ephesian and Colossian truth, always to keep them together, like the two lines of rails on which the engine runs. It is most important in the holy omniscient judgment of the Holy Ghost, that we keep always together these two lines of teaching. Alas! it is not always done. When one gets hold of one side, and neglects the other,

he is in danger. Hence the word is, to read both Epistles, and let grace and truth, divine grace and human responsibility, privileges and precepts, be known equally. If this had been attended to, good men would not have been found jarring, or clinging to only one side of truth.

Verse 17.—"And say to Archippus." It seems as if some one in the Church of Colosse was not in his proper place. Archippus means, "Master of the horses." After the saints have been taken up to Heaven (Rev. v.), the power of evil will assume shape, and defy the Son of God to His face. The second Psalm asks: "Why do the people neigh," like the neighing of horses? Presently the Lord will come down as the Rider on the white horse in judgment on His foes (Rev. xix. 11-14), His faithful servants, who served Him here in lowly paths, now rewarded, and with Him. Philippians means "lovers of horses," and chapter ii. 1-3 shews how the saints are to fight by getting down, not seeking to be great in the world, or the Church, but going down in order that Christ may lift them up. "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Whatever the service may have been, it was appointed by the Lord, and He was to complete it—carry it out. Every Christian ought to know his place and his work, and stick to both. Never budge an inch from the post where the Lord has put you; if you do, you will hear of it at the judgment-seat. To say: "I feel as if my work is done," is only a bit of proud flesh. Your

work will not be done till the Lord comes, or calls you to be with Him. Therefore, as long as you are here, take heed to the service, and complete it. Do not run about trying lots of things. Some are fond of new employments, but the word to Archippus, and to all of us who are in danger of being up and away to great things, to the neglect of that special work provided and appointed by the Lord, is: "Fulfil it." Go on, and on, in patient continuance in well-doing, and the Lord will reward you. It is a strong word that, "fill it full." It is used of the Lord Jesus in Luke ix. 31—"The exodus which He should *fulfil*." Paul's aim was to *finish* his course with joy" (Acts xx. 24), and at the end he was able to say: "I have *finished* my course," and he saw the crown "laid up" for him (2 Tim. iv. 8). So let it be our constant desire to fulfil our service and finish our course, keeping at it, going on and on, with unfaltering step, until Jesus calls us home, or till He comes to gather all His saints together, to be for ever in His unclouded presence. Some do not finish their course, or complete their service. Moses did not: he was hindered from crossing the Jordan because of his sin at Meribah. He accused the people of God, and spake unadvisedly with his lips, and his course as a servant was cut short. Elijah, mighty man as he was, stopped short of completing his service. Paul went on in the path of obedience, counting not his life dear to him, and completed his course with joy. Oh, to end as he did, with

the Lord standing with us to strengthen and deliver, even should all others flee (2 Tim. iv. 17).

Verse 18.—"Remember my bonds." He was suffering for their sake (chap. i. 24), and in the fulfilment of his service for the Church. Yet what care he had for others, ready to pour out his life in service (Phil. ii. 17) joyfully for Christ and His people. "Grace be with you." As he begins (chap. i. 2) so he ends with "Grace." And so end all the Pauline Epistles. It is so blessed to know that what Grace has begun, it will not cease to perform till the glory is reached.

"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

Summary of the Epistle.

CHAPTER I.—The Fulness of Christ, the Head of His body, the Church, and the Lord of the individual saint. First, Who He is; then, what He has done that He should be our Lord; our former state; where grace has brought us, and the mystery.

CHAPTER II.—The desire that we may understand the mystery, warning us how Christ's excellence and fulness may be denied by man's traditions, Rationalism and Ritualism, and a recurrence to worldly religion. The way of preservance from all is, by "Holding the Head," from Whom all true nutriment flows.

CHAPTER III.—How Christ's claims as Lord are to be owned, the walk and conduct becoming those who are risen with Christ. The title "Lord" occurs seven times in the closing verses of this chapter, in connection with relative duties, all of which are to be fulfilled as unto the Lord.

CHAPTER IV.—Exhortations and Salutations as to walk and service, in view of the judgment-seat of Christ, where the results of both, in reward or loss, will be made known.

Colossians is occupied with the Head, in Whom is all fulness for the body.

Ephesians describes the body, and tells that it is the fulness of the Head.

Philippians places a worthy object before the soul, and shews how everything is set aside to gain it, while Colossians tells the worth of that object, and warns against all that would allure from it.

Each thus needs the other, and all the lines of teaching in these Epistles are to be held together.

Were these distinctions observed, and the lines of truth taught in these Epistles always combined, many controversies would speedily be settled. Let us love and hold fast all the Word of God. God means all He says. Let us not add unto it, or diminish ought from it. We cannot afford to give up one part of God's truth. That which presses us the hardest is what we most need.

Appendix.

Paul's Ministry.

(Chapter i. 23, 25.)

THE Gospel preached by the Apostle Paul was in advance of that of Peter and the other eleven Apostles. The ministry of the twelve is described thus:—"Of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (Acts i. 21). Their teaching was of a Christ upon earth, Who died and rose again; very little more generally did the twelve speak of. Paul's Gospel was of a Christ in glory. "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Acts xxvi. 16). What had he seen? What Peter had not seen—*a Christ in glory*. Hence there is emphasis on what Paul speaks of when he says, "*My* Gospel" (Romans xvi. 25). So also in 2 Cor. iv. 3—"If *our* Gospel be hid." The context shews it was the Gospel of a Christ in glory. Whilst then Paul told of Christ dead and risen (1 Cor. xv. 1-3), there was a further line of things committed to him, which had not been given to the eleven. He heard the Risen Christ speak of His persecuted saints on earth as part of

Himself—"Why persecutest thou Me?" Paul's ministry began where Stephen's left off. Stephen saw Him *standing*, but rejected still by men, but Paul saw Him *seated* at the right hand of God (Heb. i. 3). He saw Him in the glory of God. And now He is calling saints to share that glory. As Paul tells us, "Whereunto He called you by *our* Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. ii. 14). And God is now intent upon bringing His "many sons" into that glory (Heb. ii. 10). From that glory He has sent down the Holy Ghost, to unite us to a glorified Christ, and to give us even now glimpses of that glory to win our hearts and to lead them up to Him there. "We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18). And when He comes, our bodies shall be fashioned like unto the body of His glory (Phil. iii. 21). Then the Bible ends by giving us a glance of the Church "having the glory of God" (Rev. xxi. 11). The unveiled glory of Christ, His saints gazing upon the full unclouded perfection of God in Christ, seeing Him as He is, and having by thus gazing that glory in themselves.

"The Kingdom of His Dear Son."

(Chapter i. 13.)

There are various kingdoms spoken of in the Word.

"The Kingdom of Heaven"—an expression which occurs most frequently in Matthew's Gospel—denotes His reign whilst He the King is in heaven. Its administration is traced in the parables of Matthew, chap. xiii. But this Kingdom of Heaven could be and was "The Kingdom of God" (Mark iv. 11) as well as when He was on earth, or when He shall have returned from heaven, as it is now during His absence from earth and presence at the right hand of God (Acts viii. 12; xx. 25). "The Kingdom of the Father" (Matt. xiii. 48): looks only at that which is according to God, when all shall be as He would have it, all having been fully and perfectly subjugated to Him by the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. xv. 20). "The Kingdom of Christ" (Rev. xi. 15), is the government of His world in the hands of Messiah. "The Kingdom of the Son of Man" shall stretch and extend to the entire creation (Psa. viii. 6-9; Dan. vii. 13, 14). "The Kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 13), contemplates the state in which the saints now are, reconciled to God by the blood of Christ, yet with evil in them, which has to be subdued. For the way of God is, to put us at conversion under the sway of His Son, whom we know and learn to obey as our Lord. He will treat us very kindly, but He will not allow insubjection to His will. He will break us in; it implies training, tutelage, and restraint, and when we have been perfectly subdued, we shall then be in the Kingdom of the Father. In the future, the first effect of His appearing to earth will be that wickedness will flee from His presence,

and righteousness will come to the front and flourish. At present, during this age of which Satan is the "god" and "prince," righteousness suffers and is pushed aside. During the millennium it will reign (Isa. xxxii. 1). Then all the righteous shall rejoice because He has at length set up His reign of righteousness in power. The objects of His reign are, first to put all things right, to order all things according to God down here, and when all has been subdued and put as God would have them, He will hand over the kingdom to God the Father. Yet His kingdom is in another sense "everlasting" (2 Pet. i. 11). All other monarchs have had their crowns wrested from them by death, or by others; not so the Lord Jesus. He will surrender the kingdom and His Lordship as Son of Man to God, but nought of His millennium work will be altered or annulled. Everything will be consolidated and settled. Then God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be all in all.

"Head of His Body—the Church."

(Chapter i. 18.)

By the Holy Ghost all who believe now are formed into one body, of which Christ risen from the dead is the Head. The Old Testament saints were not of this body, How could they be? The Holy Ghost had not then come down personally from heaven to earth by whom

such a union is formed, neither was there a Head in heaven to whom they could be united. There was no union with Christ before He died. Then He abode alone (John xii. 24). Only as "First-born from the dead" is He "Head of the Church—His body" (Col. i. 18). Not even when the Church had begun to exist as a matter of fact, consequent on His ascension to heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, was the doctrine of it revealed immediately: nor until Paul had been called and received his commission from the Lord Jesus, and was made a minister of the Gospel and of the Church (Col. i. 23). And to him was committed the stewardship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hidden in God (Eph. iii. 7).

"Perfect in Christ Jesus."

(Chapter i. 28.)

The word "perfect" in the New Testament is the translation of two utterly different words in the Greek.

Telios, as in this verse, and Heb. v. 14. This looks at our individual likeness to Christ.

Katartizo, as in 1 Corinthians i. 10, and 2 Corinthians xiii. 9, 11, refers to our being well fitted into the body, perfectly joined together, each knowing and keeping his proper place in the assembly of God.

If we know not what we are in Christ, we are not

Telios. If we cause trouble and disturb the fellowship of saints by our sectarianism, or by our self-seeking and self-importance, wanting to be uppermost, we are not *Katartizo.*

The Mystery.

(CHAPTER ii. 2.)

THE mystery which had been hid in God from all ages, is the unity of the body—the Church. That Jews and Gentiles believing in the Lord Jesus should be made one with the risen Christ in glory, is something new indeed. As it is, or ought to be, in Eph. iii. 6, "That the Gentiles should be heirs *together*, should be a body *together*, should be sharers *together* of the promise in Christ." The calling of the Gentiles was not hid. The mercy of God to the Gentiles is mentioned in many of the prophetic Scriptures, but that they should be made "a body together" with believing Jews, was indeed a new thing in the universe. When the religious Jew believes on the Lord Jesus, he is made one with the irreligious Gentile. Both lose their identity, and become one in Christ. Thus we have the unique character and calling of the Church. When the Church is removed from the earth, then the distinction between the Jew and the Gentile will be resumed, but for the present, during the presence of the Son of God at His Father's right hand, and the presence of the Holy Ghost here on earth, all

such differences are set aside. This is the period of the outcalling of the Church, which is a new, unique, a singular thing in the universe. And this mystery of the Church is not only a unique body *now*, but it will remain so for ever. Hebrews xii. 23, clearly shows, that it will be so throughout the millennium, and Ephesians iii. 21, adds—"Unto Him be glory *in the Church*, by Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of ages. Amen."

Ministry.

(CHAPTER ii. 19.)

"THE Head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered." In the first Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. xii. 14-24), we are taught that the body has many members, but that all the members have not the same office. In the Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. iv. 10-14), we learn that the risen Christ gives gifts to men for the upbuilding of His body. The former passage reminds us that the Spirit uses whom He will, and that He must not be quenched or hindered in His operations. The latter, marks a distinct provision made by Christ for His peoples' sustainence and growth. The former shows how the Church is cast upon Him, how He may use the five words of one unlettered, or of a babe in Christ, and hence the need of providing liberty for those to minister in the assembly such as the great

Sovereign God to whom it belongs would have. The latter tells how the Lord in His love and faithfulness provides for, and will never fail His Church, and how rule is to be perpetuated therein. For it is His will, that those who minister to, and feed the flock, should with others whom He raises up and fits, rule and guide it (see Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24; 1 Pet. v. 1-3). And the need of such rule must be obvious, when we remember, that wherever there is liberty for the Spirit to use whomsoever He will, there is also liberty for the flesh to intrude itself with unprofitable ministry, which for the glory of the Lord and the welfare of the saints must be stopped (Titus i. 11). Man's way is to have everything arranged, which, while it may ensure order such as man can approve of, shuts out God, and stops up the channels His Spirit might use in ministering grace to the saints. The ignoring of the Corinthian side of the truth has led to the introduction of clerisy, and the rejection of the Holy Ghost in ministry, while the neglect of the Ephesian aspect of the truth has led some to fancy they are able to minister, whereas their words have only the effect of bringing upon the saints leanness and coldness. The very words used by the Spirit to describe these two forms of ministry are different. That of Corinthians is *karismata*, while in Ephesians it is *domata*. And while the gifts of Ephesians are pledged to continue to the end—"till we all come to the unity of the faith unto a perfect man," those of Corinthians are not.

It ought to be noticed too, that the double object of the gifts in Ephesians is, first "for the perfecting of the saints *unto* the work of ministry,"—not to do everything for them; and second, as looking on further still, "unto the edifying of the body of Christ." And this work of giving is His own work alone, none can take it out of His hand. Some presume to make men into ministers by the laying on of their hands horizontally; others choose their own ministers by holding up one hand perpendicularly, but here Christ is seen with all the gifts in His hand, dispersing them as He will, for the welfare of His Church.

Worship.

(Chapter ii. 21.)

What is worship? It is neither praise nor prayer, much less is it listening to a discourse or sermon. Worship is the overflow of hearts occupied with Christ. In *prayer* we are occupied with our wants: in *praise* we think of our blessings: but in *worship* the heart is occupied with *Himself*. To worship God we must be consciously at rest in His presence, enjoying His love. As the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us, our hearts are filled to overflowing in our adoration of Him.

Worship in its fullest and highest sense is in the

assembly, gathered in His Name, with the Lord in the midst (Matt. xviii. 20). This place He took amongst His own, immediately He had risen from the dead (John xx. 19). This place He takes still in grace, and it will be the place He will have in the future "in the midst of the Church" (Heb. ii. 12). Thus gathered around Him, with the Spirit to lead, we proclaim His death, and own Him as our Head and Lord, while we wait for His return.

The Body and the Bride.

It has been vehemently asserted by some, that the Church is not the heavenly Bride of Christ, that there is only one Scripture which seems to show this, and that when it is examined it will not be found to assert that this is so. Alas! it has ever been the habit of those who seek to fritter away the truth, to attempt to weaken the force of that truth by saying that only such and such Scriptures speak of it, and as their opposition increases, the number of such Scriptures become fewer and fewer. It is said that Ephesians v. is the only Scripture that can be made to support this. Well, if this were the only one, is it not ample? But I am certain that there are other Scriptures that clearly teach the bridal relationship of the Church to Christ: and others assume it. The term "Bride" may not be found, but the sentiment is

abundantly. Can there be any doubt that the allusion in Ephesians v. 23-32, is to Eve being taken out from Adam's body to become his bride? Does this type teach that the Church is the body but not the bride? The inspired comment given by the apostle entirely sets aside such a thought. He says, "I speak concerning Christ AND the Church." Now, if the teaching here implies that the Church is only viewed as the body of Christ, what is the force of the word "AND"? In another Scripture, where the same Apostle is dealing with the Church as the body of Christ, his language is entirely different. There he says, "So also is THE Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12, Greek). Here there is no "AND," for the two are one. Head and members together form "THE Christ." But in Ephesians v. 30, there is an "AND," for the one is assumed to be two. The former, in which the twain are one, points to the grandeur of the Church's position as one with Christ: the latter shows her subordination, and His affection. These truths thus connected, were designed by God to be counter-truths. To disturb or remove either, is to mar the effect of both. As the body of Christ, the Church has Him as Head *above* her; as the Bride she will have Him ever *with* her.

The Rewards of the Judgment-Seat.

(Chapter iii. 24.)

The rapture to heaven of the entire Church to the unveiled presence of God, to behold Him in all His glory, will be God's own answer, to the full value He has put on the work of Christ. Never before had He so fully told all its value, as now, when He lifts up into His own immediate presence those who had on earth put their trust in that precious blood. Their presence in the Father's house is due to Grace alone; their sole title to be there, is found in the Blood of the Lamb. The Father's house precedes in point of time, the Judgment-Seat of Christ and the Kingdom. The family circle is before the glory of the throne, or the displayed glory of the Kingdom. "Caught up to God and to His throne" (Rev. xii. 5.) In the first and highest of these three, the work of Christ is alone regarded. In the other two, our works, the response of our hearts to His grace will be measured and rewarded at His judgment-seat after He has welcomed us to His presence in infinite grace and love. The crowns He will give are for faithful service to Him here below. (See 1 Thess. ii. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 10; 1 Peter v. 4; James i. 12.) The crowns will be diverse as the service had been. Each will express the measure of the Lord's approbation of His servant's work, and be an evidence of it to others, illustrating His own word of cheer, "Well done." And these rewards have all an

abiding and eternal character (2 Peter i. 11). They are not like the honours conferred by men, which wither and die (1 Cor. ix. 27). Yet let it ever be remembered, that our common standing as the children of God is the highest. Just as the members of a royal family may be —one a colonel of a regiment, another the captain of a ship, yet when they come together, they do so on the ground of being children of one family. So will it be with the saints of God. One will rule over ten cities (Luke xix. 10), another over five, yet the competency of both to reign will be the possession of Divine life, and this alone by sovereign grace and mercy, which lifted each one up from the dunghill to sit among princes.

Truths and their Counter Truths.

(Chapter iv. 16.)

To every truth God has revealed in His Word, there is a counter truth. If you wish to be kept from being an heretic, then do not learn so much on one side of the truth as to ignore the other. If you have found any single truth to be precious to your soul, then be sure you look out for its counter truth, and give it your attention also, otherwise by occupying yourself wholly with one side of truth to the neglect of the other, you will be in danger of pushing it into the place of heresy. For it is well to remember, that heresy as spoken of in the Scripture,

is not error, but truth pushed out of its place to the disparagement or ignoring of other truths which have been given by God to balance it. Heresy is selected truth; truth taken out of its connection, and forced into undue importance, hence "an heretic" (Titus iii. 10) is one who chooses, who makes selection according to his own tastes, and who forms a party round that which he thus chooses. If a believer wants to go on rightly, holding a straight course in the Word of God, he must always remember that God's truth is two-sided, and that every truth has its counter truth. For in us there is the ever-recurring tendency to set up one side of truth against another, to hold one side so as to disparage or neutralise the other. God's truth is ever in extremes, but not in one extreme without the other. In order to be safe, the two extremes must be held together. Statements in God's Word may be divers, but never diverse, truths will be found to be counter, but never contrary.

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